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CAPT. GEORGE CROWE sat at the head of a crowded table in a cabin which it would be an understatement merely to call crowded. For the first time since his appointment as Captain D. commanding the Twentieth Destroyer Flotilla he had the opportunity of a personal conference with the greater part of his destroyer captains. Safely back in Alexandria from the fighting round Crete, he could look round at the grouped figures. There were one or two gray heads, of men older than himself, whom he had passed in the race for promotion, but mostly they were young, eager faces; men desperately proud of their commands and eagerly awaiting the opportunity of further distinction.

In Crowe's hands was a chart, and copies of it were being studied by his subordinates—a chart with a curious history, as was only to be expected, seeing that it contained all the details of the harbor defenses of the Italian port of Crotona. There was nothing romantic about the history of that chart; no beautiful woman spy had inveigled it out of the possession of an Italian officer, but it was the product of some weeks of patient work. Every reconnaissance plane which had flown over Crotona had taken photographs of the place and the approaches to it, and, naturally, in a high proportion of the photographs there had appeared pictures of vessels entering or leaving. Correlating these pictures, the naval staff had been able to map out the areas in

## DAWN ATTACK

By  
C. S. Forester

ILLUSTRATED BY BEN STAHL

which ships appeared and the areas in which ships never appeared, and thus had been able to make out a pretty clear picture of the extent of the mine fields guarding the port; moreover, by joining on the map the successive positions of the ships photographed entering and leaving, the fairway between the mine fields could be accurately plotted.

The photographs of the town itself, diligently compared one with the other, revealed the places of importance sufficient to merit the attention of the Twentieth Flotilla in the operation which Crowe had in mind. The British Navy was hitting back; the Battle Fleet was going into the bombardment of Genoa while the Twentieth Flotilla was to take advantage of the protection it afforded to raid Crotona and clean up that pestilential nest of shallow-draft raiders.

Nickleby, the flotilla gunnery officer and the model of all staff virtues, was explaining the various targets to the destroyer captains.

"I've marked the positions each ship is to assume," he said; "also the various aiming points. The MAS depot is at the base of the white cliff at the east end of the town. Potawatomi'll clean that up. Shoshone'll have the wireless masts in clear view, so she'll be able to deal with those. Now, the oil tanks are below a crest—you can see them marked in square G Nine. Cheyenne and Navaho, in the stations assigned to them, will be able to hit them. Nine degrees to starboard of the line con-

necting the church steeple and the factory chimney—that's one of their bearings—and range four two double-o will do the business nicely. Seminoles —"

Nickleby droned on endlessly, outlining the perfect paper scheme in the stuffy heat of the cabin, while Crowe moved restlessly in his chair and studied the earnest serious faces. He felt suddenly incredibly wise and, by deduction from that, incredibly old. Nickleby seemed to him much like some young man describing to his grandfather the Utopian world that ought to be established. Something ideally enchanting, but which made no allowance for the inconsistencies of human nature or for unexpected contingencies. Operations of war never did go the way they were planned. Not even at Zeebrugge, one of the best-planned operations in history, had the attack been able to proceed mechanically; if it had, he would never have had the opportunity of winning the blue-and-red ribbon which he wore. And, of all operations of war, a surprise at dawn was the trickiest of the lot. When Nickleby brought his beautiful paper scheme to him for his approval, he had permitted himself to smile, and the smile had nettled Nickleby, just the way the grandfather's smile of toleration would nettle the Utopian young man. But he had let him go on with it; it was just as well for his officers to familiarize themselves with the problems and the objectives of this particular operation, and this was as good a way as any other, as long as their minds remained flexible enough to deal with the inevitable emergencies when they arose.

Nickleby had finished his explanations now and everyone was looking to Crowe for further remarks. He fumbled for his pipe to give himself time to arrange in his mind what he was going to say, and he



grinned benevolently at these young men as he filled it and lit it, and he punctuated his opening words with puffs of smoke, paying close attention to pressing down the burning tobacco. He could remember his own father making just the same gestures. It was queer being forty-two; when he was by himself he felt just the same as he did when he was twenty, but put him with all these young people who treated him as if he were sixty and for the life of him he could not prevent himself from acting like it. It was partly due to his rank, of course; this enforced senility was the penalty he had to pay for the four gold stripes on his arm.

"Nothing"—puff—"is sure"—puff—"in a sea fight beyond all others, but"—puff—"no captain can do very wrong"—puff—"if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy"—puff. "Who wrote that, Rowles?"

"Nelson, sir," said Rowles promptly, and Crowe found himself feeling like a schoolmaster now, instead of a father.

"It says exactly what I want to say," said Crowe, "and better than I can say it for myself. Everyone quite clear on what he has to do? Very good, then, gentlemen, I think that will do."

There was no need for any claptrap appeal to sentiment, fine phrases or historic utterances. Not with those men.

The summer Mediterranean produced a summer storm that night while the Twentieth Flotilla was making its way toward Crotona, and, as is the way with the summer Mediterranean, it took only a short blow to raise a nasty lumpy sea. Crowe, eating his dinner with his staff, noticed the increased motion immediately. The fiddles were already on the tables to prevent the crockery from sliding clean off, and the tablecloth had already been damped to provide enough friction to keep the things more or less in their places, but these precautions were already insufficient.

Holby hurriedly excused himself and left the cabin—the poor fellow was always as sick as a dog in any kind of sea. Crowe cocked an inquiring eyebrow at Rowles.

"Glass is dropping fast, sir," said Rowles; "this is going to be a lot worse before it gets better."

"It might have let us finish our dinner in peace," grumbled Crowe, and regretted the speech a moment later. He realized that there was at least one profound difference between himself at forty-two and himself at twenty; dinner was much more important nowadays, and he had lost the light-hearted acceptance of the picnic meals served perforce in a destroyer in a heavy sea.

An eighteen-hundred-ton destroyer making thirty knots in rough water behaves in a way to be expected of a ship of her design. The proportion of her length to her breadth is very like the proportions of a lead pencil, and one has only to float a lead pencil in a bathtub and then agitate the water to form a good idea of the antics a destroyer performs in a storm. The higher a gun is mounted above the water's edge, the more efficiently can it be served, so that a destroyer's guns are mounted just as high as is consistent with stability; and on her deck are mounted four ponderous torpedo tubes; and the fire-control system also demands the loftiest position possible. So that a destroyer is liable to roll just as far as is consistent with the limits of safety; she differs from the pencil in that the pencil rolls completely over and over, while the destroyer only very nearly does. Crowe thought of the pencil analogy several times while that storm persisted and the Apache churned her way doggedly through the short steep Mediterranean waves. The seas breaking over the decks made them practically impassable; first she rolled, and then she corkscrewed, and then she pitched, as the wind steadily backed round. The waves hitting her square in the bows sent continual shudders through her, as though some harsh invisible brake had just been applied, liable to tear the unwary from any careless handhold. The miracle was that the flotilla was able to keep together at all. Crowe blessed the fact that he had learned to sleep in a hammock; he had one slung for him and slept stolidly in it, flung about as madly as though in a swing; lying in a berth under those conditions was as tiring as not going to bed at all.

During the day the wind died down, although the sky still remained a somber gray, but the storm, in its passage down the Mediterranean ahead of them, still flogged the sea into wicked waves, each one of

which sent its corresponding shudder through the frail fabric of the Apache.

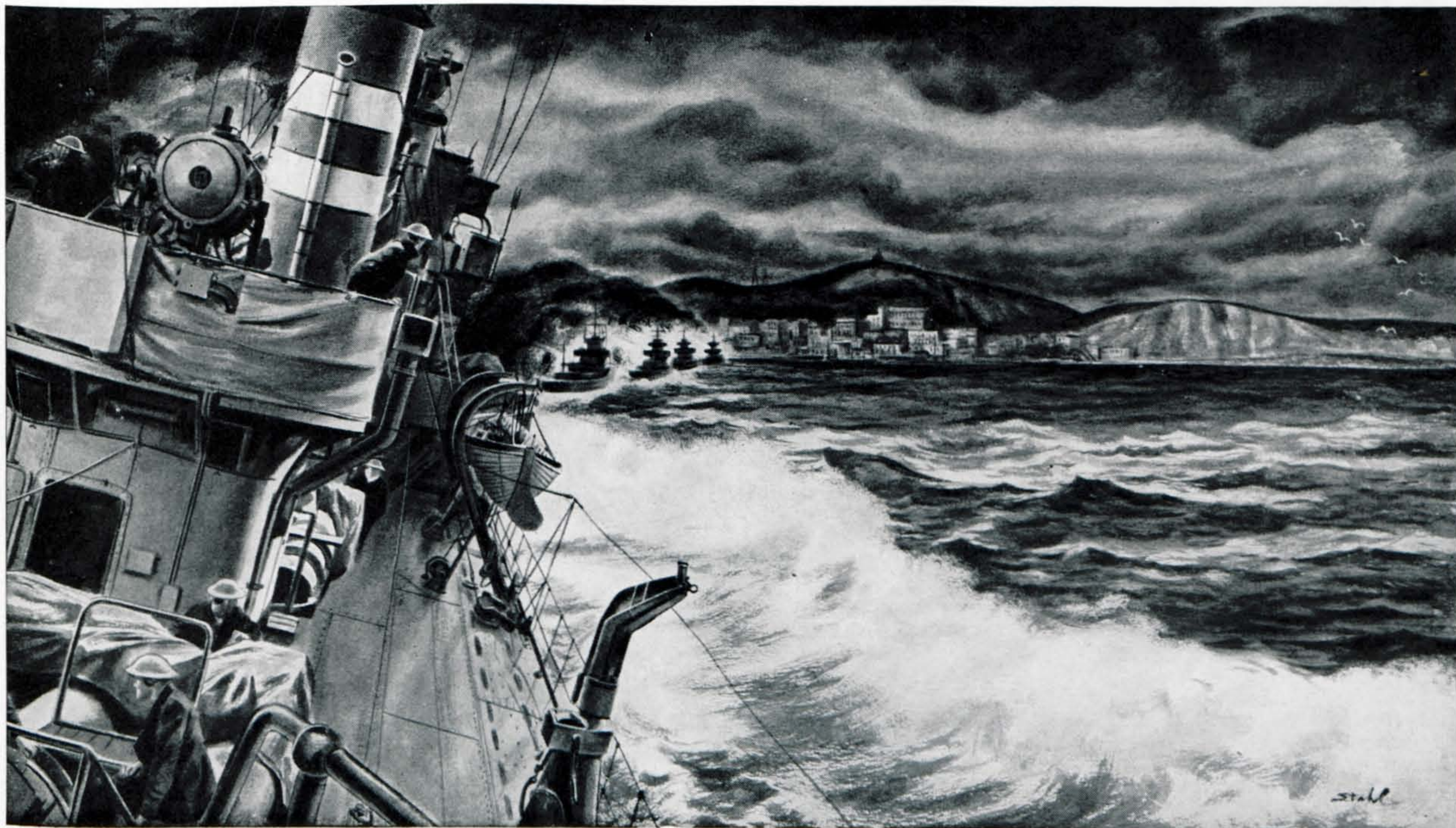
They did more than that. The modern art of navigation with its precise instruments and accurate measurements is still not quite efficient in the face of Nature at its wildest. Subtle calculations could tell Rowles just how far every turn of the screw had thrust the Apache through the water, and accurate meters, more than human in their un-sleeping watchfulness, could tell him just how many turns the screws had made. But they could not tell him—nor could any instrument on earth—just how many inches each one of those waves had held her back. The marvelous gyrocompass could tell Rowles just what course the Apache was steering, but it could not tell him how far she was drifting off to leeward with the force of the wind sideways upon her upper works. Directional wireless could help him to fix his position, but in wartime, with the flotilla maintaining the strictest wireless silence, it was not so easy, especially as the farther the Apache proceeded on her course, the more acute became the angle she made with the British stations on land and the greater the possibility of error.

Rowles was a brilliant navigator—in no other way could he have become flotilla navigating officer—but the most brilliant navigator in the world, with a lifetime of experience behind him, could not, in wartime, conduct a flotilla through a prolonged storm and at the end of it be sure within ten miles of where he was. In peacetime, as long as one acknowledged the possibility of that error to oneself and was ready to allow for it, ten miles was unimportant, but in time of war, with a surprise at dawn in contemplation, ten miles might mean the difference between success and failure and between life and death.

They all knew that when they clustered on the bridge together an hour before dawn. Holby was still pale with his seasickness, but Rowles was pale with nervous tension. He was attempting to check back in his mind the elaborate calculations he had employed—a quite impossible feat. Nickleby was nervous, too, thinking of the elaborate allocation of targets which he had made, and wondering if, supposing he found at

(Continued on Page 63)

*The long 4.7's were training round, and as the signal came down they burst into a fury of fire.*





# DAWN ATTACK

(Continued from Page 15)

this moment that he had made some error, there would be a chance of rectifying it. It was a moment like those grim seconds before entering an examination room or going onto the field before an important game. Crowe looked at their tense faces; it was an object lesson to him in human nature that these gallant young men, about to plunge into an enterprise of the utmost physical danger, were so much worried at the thought of making fools of themselves that the thought of sudden death did not occur to them at all. It made him smile momentarily, but he checked himself sternly. At too many gloomy wardroom breakfasts could he remember the hostility aroused by the smiling optimist who comes in beaming.

The light was steadily increasing, and the sea had been moderating all through the night. It was no longer necessary to hold on with both hands to preserve one's foothold on the bridge; there was a hand to spare to hold the glasses to one's eyes in a desperate attempt to catch the earliest possible sight of the still invisible land ahead.

Sublieutenant Lord Edward Mortimer, R.N.R., was nervous as well. He knew this bit of coast intimately, and he was standing by, ready for his local knowledge to be called into service. He knew it in peacetime; he had anchored his yacht often in Crotona itself, and many had been the brief cruises he had made from there; he had a store of memories of sun-baked beaches and



"And watch her in the meantime," said J. C.

"Then let's git goin'," said Johnny-Behind-the-Stove. He asked no questions. It was enough for him that there would be business for the heavy rifle of which he was a master.

"Get your gun," said Sugarfoot, "and slide out the back way. We'll need three head of riding stock. Go to my camp. Get saddled with as little racket as possible and hide the mounts. We may have to start in a hurry."

Johnny-Behind-the-Stove spat accurately. "I hain't had no fun in a coon's age," he said.

Outside in the street, Sugarfoot walked along in the shadows. Fly-up-the-Creek dropped into step beside him. "Didn't have to look fur to find Goodhue," he said. "He's kind of prowlin' around after you jest like a shadder."

"Good. Keep him in sight, but be careful. There's a light in Don Miguel's store. I'm going there. Don't lose sight of Goodhue, and be ready to move fast."

He strode across the Plaza to the adobe store, where he found Wormser busy over his books. "Let us go into the back room," Sugarfoot said. "I want to discuss something with you." He lowered his voice. "I hope we are going to be overheard. Make no objection to anything I say."

"You make a scheme, eh?" Don Miguel asked in a whisper.

Sugarfoot nodded. Don Miguel carried a lamp into the back room and then went over to a window in the rear wall. "I let in some air," he said. "Iss goot to breathe air." He lifted the window six inches, so that anyone lurking outside would have no difficulty with his eavesdropping. They talked in low tones for five minutes, until Goodhue, if he meant to listen, would have had an opportunity to conceal himself.

Then Sugarfoot spoke more distinctly. "It's fixed this way," he said: "We'll load all the gold and currency on my wagon at four o'clock in the morning. Everybody will be ready. Crane has his cash all bagged and waiting. So has the Nifty and three or four other places, including the merchants."

"Ja. Iss goot. I be ready."

"So," said Sugarfoot, "if there should be a raid, the town will be cleaned out. Nothing left to rob. And who'll expect all that money to go out on a freight wagon? Maybe nothing is going to happen, but whatever does happen, the money will be out of reach."

"We fool dem goot," chuckled Don Miguel. "They t'ink we wait for Wells, Fargo, maybe. How many ride mit your wagon, Sugarfoot?"

"Just Fly-up-the-Creek and I. We don't want it to look as if we were carrying anything valuable."

"I like better if there iss more guard."

"We'll get it through all right. There's no danger as far as Date Creek. If things don't look safe from there to La Paz, I'll ask for an escort of soldiers."

"Me, I vill be glad when that money iss safe in San Francisco. I like better drafts on those banks than gold in the safe."

"Then you'll be ready at four o'clock?"

"All ready," Don Miguel assured him.

"Then I'll get along and snatch a couple of hours' sleep," said Sugarfoot. "Good night."

"Goot night. Also goot luck."

Sugarfoot stood once more in the street. He walked across town to his camp, where in his tent, by lantern light, he composed a short note to Reva Cairn.

"My dear," it said, "I am going to look for Jacob Stint. If there should be bad luck, then this is good-by. All I have is yours. This is my will. I will pin this to your door. I go loving you with all my heart." He signed it formally, "Jackson Redan."

Johnny-Behind-the-Stove stood in the tent's opening. "All saddled and ready," he said.

Then, silently, Fly-up-the-Creek was there. "He was there, listenin' outside of Don Miguel's. Soon's you left, he come a-skedaddlin'. Hypered over 'n' saddled that there stumpy, long-haired pony he rides around on. By this time he's acrost the creek. He hain't aheadin' no'th or east, so he must be makin' fur some'eres betwixt here 'n' Iron Springs."

"We kin cross-cut 'n' git ahead of him," said Johnny-Behind-the-Stove.

"That's a job for one of us," said Sugarfoot. "One keep ahead and one follow. Then we can't miss where he turns off. Stint will be hiding well back from the road."

"Reckon I know the country best," said Fly-up-the-Creek. "I'll light out ahead."

He swung into the saddle of the big mule. A Navy Colt slapped his hip, but across his pommel lay the weight of a long and heavy Sharps rifle. He patted its stock. "When she lets go," he said, "suthin's got to give." Then he disappeared into the darkness.

Sugarfoot and Johnny-Behind-the-Stove followed him. They crossed Granite Creek and headed westward at an easy gait. There was no moon and the woods and hills mingled in an impenetrable mass of inky blackness. Sugarfoot experienced a curious sensation of contentment that was akin to resignation. He was riding to his hour. At last the threat that had hung suspended over him was about to descend and to become fact. Before many hours passed, the decision was to be made by fate or destiny and he rode to that decision gladly.

He did not believe Jacob Stint's hiding place could be distant or inaccessible. If it had been, Goodhue would not have dared to ride to it in the nighttime, for the rotund little man was no horseman, nor was he one to attempt physical feats of danger or difficulty. Stint would be in one of those innumerable canyons or gulches which cut gashes in the surrounding mountains, encamped and waiting.

He could make no plan. What was to be done must depend upon the conditions as he found them. The element of surprise was with him, but the odds of man power were heavily against him. One thing became evident as he considered the circumstances, and that was that Asa Goodhue must not reach and warn Stint. Stint and his companions must not be permitted to move out in the darkness, but must lie without suspicion until the sun arose. They must be clearly visible over the sights of rifles. Three men could not fight a dozen if the dozen could not be seen.

They had been riding close to an hour when Fly-up-the-Creek rejoined them, appearing suddenly out of the blackness.

"He's less 'n a quatter of a mile ahead. Ridin' like he was afraid his hoss 'd stub its toe," he said.

"Go on ahead," directed Sugarfoot. "When he turns off the road, stop him."



sunburned bodies stretched on golden sands, of beautiful women in lovely clothes, of exquisite ruins on the gray-green hilltops overlooking the blue sea.

"Is that land?" demanded Holby sharply; perhaps seasickness had, as it often does, sharpened his senses.

They all peered through the grayness; little by little what Holby had first seen took form and solidity.

"That's not Crotona," said Rowles, and there was heartbreak in his voice.

"Do you recognize it, Mortimer?" demanded Crowe.

"It's not Crotona," agreed Lord Edward; "it's ——" Lord Edward ranged back through his memories. It was that Viennese girl—he couldn't remember her name now—away back in those impossibly peaceful years. They had gone picnicking with a couple of mules. A cold chicken and a bottle of wine, and some of that sheep's-milk cheese. He could remember the smell of the *macchia* in the sunshine.

"We're seven miles north," said Lord Edward; "eight, perhaps."

It had been pleasant riding back on that shambling old mule over those eight miles.

"You're sure of that?" said Crowe.

"Yes," said Lord Edward. He was sure, although he could not remember the girl's name.

Crowe's staff looked at one another and at Crowe.

"They'll have sighted us already," said Holby.

"No chance of surprise," supplemented Rowles, turning the iron in his own wound.

Crowe said nothing, for his mind was too active for speech.

"We can adopt the other plan," said Nickleby; "the one we first thought of and discarded. Stay outside the mine field and fire across the neck of the peninsula."

"Probably that's the best thing we can do," agreed Rowles.

"Mortimer's right," interrupted Holby; "there's the Greek amphitheater on that hillside."

Lord Edward remembered that amphitheater; he had last seen it by moonlight, and he had not been alone.

"Signal 'Follow me,'" said Crowe to the chief yeoman of signals, and then to Hammett, "Four points to port, please."

The Twentieth Flotilla wheeled southward like a flight of gulls.

"We've still got a chance of doing damage," said Nickleby; "we can signal the other captains to lay on the targets already assigned to them from the new positions. They'll have the sense to know what we're after, and firing over the peninsula might be fairly effective."

The staff was ready to extemporize, and to make the best of a bad job, and not to admit failure.

"If we strike at once we can still take advantage of surprise," said Holby. Running in his mind was a whole series of quotations from Napoleon's sayings which had been drummed into him when he underwent his staff training: "Strike hard and strike quickly." "The moral is to the physical as three to one." "Victory will go to the side which suddenly produces an imposing force of guns."

"We're going in through the mine field," said Crowe, like a bolt from the clear sky. "Take us in, Rowles."

His staff stared at him. It had not crossed their minds for a moment that, having given the enemy twenty minutes' warning of their approach, Crowe would still continue to act upon the original daring plan. With a tremendous effort Rowles exchanged his astonished expression for one of a proper imperturbability. "Aye, aye, sir," he said, and turned to give the orders to the quartermaster.

The flotilla moved down the sleeping shore and wheeled again at the entrance to the channel.

The rhythm of the throbbing engines beneath their feet changed as Rowles rang down for reduced speed to enable the Apache to take the tricky

a thunder of gunfire. Still no shot was fired; the town of Crotona grew steadily more and more distinct as they neared it, the individual houses standing out like cubes of sugar scattered over the hillside.

They could see the cathedral now, and the steeple of Saint Eufemia, the wireless masts and the gasworks—all the aiming points which were to direct the flotilla's guns—and still there was no sign of activity on the shore.

Safely through the channel, the second division of the flotilla diverged from the wake of the leading one and deployed for action. The long 4.7's were training round, and as the signal came down they burst into a fury of fire. The nine destroyers carried seventy-two 4.7's, and each one fired a fifty-pound shell every four seconds.

Crowe stood on the bridge with the earsplitting din echoing round him and grimly surveyed the ruin he was causing. He saw first one wireless mast and then the other totter and fall. There was a solid satisfaction in seeing the shells bursting in the clustered mass of MAS—the motor torpedo boats on which the Italians had always prided themselves. The factory chimney swayed over to one side and disappeared in a solid block, like a felled tree, and then over the ridge came the satisfactory sign of volumes of thick black smoke; the mixture of high explosives and incendiaries which Cheyenne and Navaho had been firing had done the business.

A naval bombardment was a much more satisfactory affair than anything that could be attempted from the air; planes might drop bigger bombs, but not with one tenth of the accuracy of a naval gun, and with none of the chance of correcting the aim which a gun permitted. The Apache's guns ceased fire for a moment and trained round on a fresh target, and then the cargo ships against the quay began to fly into pieces under the tremendous blows dealt them.

But it was in that interval of silence that Crowe heard the rumble of shells passing overhead. The shore batteries had opened fire at last, but they had never been intended for use against ships within the mine field. The startled Italian gunners either could not or would not depress their guns far enough to hit.

"Make the signal for 'Second division discontinue the action,'" said Crowe. When he heard the harshness of his own voice—the involuntary

harshness—he realized the tenseness to which he had been screwed up, and he wondered vaguely for a moment what his blood pressure was.

But this was no time for mental digressions. The second division was heading back through the mine field, and the first division was following them, with the Apache covering the rear.

It was more nervous work going out round the turns of the channel even than coming in, for now they were under the fire of the shore batteries. The silence, now that the Apache's guns had ceased firing, was almost oppressive, but Crowe looked with pride

## JOSEPH SEELEY AND ISAAC OSBORN

By BERTON BRALEY

**M**AKER of hats in the proper style  
Was Joseph Seeley, of Quaker Hill.

Hats to last for a long, long while,

Hats he fashioned with loving skill,  
Strictly holding to Quaker "plainness"  
With no concession to worldly vainness.

'Twas on his eightieth birthday that  
Old Isaac Osborn ordered a hat,  
And Seeley made it with special care  
For a dignified elderly Friend to wear.

Said Joseph proudly, "Now, Isaac, here  
Is a hat to last thee many a year,  
A hat of fine material, made  
With the finest craftsmanship of my trade,  
A plain, respectable, honest hat  
Which, treated kindly and used with reason,  
May well outlast thee—assuming that  
Thee dies in decent and proper season!"

'Twas on his ninetieth birthday that  
Old Isaac ordered another hat,  
And the hat was made and the bill was reckoned  
By Joseph Seeley—but Joseph, Second.

Old Isaac's vigor and health were splendid;  
His "decent and proper season" ended  
When, reaching the age of ninety-seven,  
He passed, in peace, to the Quaker heaven.  
And the plain, respectable, dignified  
Hat he wore till the day he died  
Was made—or legend so gives the word—  
By Joseph Seeley—but Joseph, Third.

turns. His nerves were steady enough; Crowe was glad to note that, despite the need for haste, Rowles refused to be rattled into a rash handling of the ship. The flotilla followed behind like beads on a string, winding its way along the channel with invisible death on either hand.

"Make the signal for 'Commence firing,'" said Crowe, and he glanced at Nickleby, who nodded back in return.

Nickleby would give the word for the signal to come down; most of the signals of the British navy, including this one, become operative at the moment when they are hauled down. Everyone on the bridge stood tense, waiting for the shore to break out into

(Continued on Page 66)



round the ship and saw the anti-aircraft guns' crews motionless at their posts, the lookouts sweeping the skies with their glasses, and Rowles' quiet voice giving orders to the quartermaster. The shells rumbled overhead, and enormous jets of water were springing up from the sea, first on this side of the flotilla and then on that. One shell, as it pitched, called up a tremendous upheaval of water, which rocked the Apache, an echoing explosion, and a pillar of black smoke.

"Shell touched off a mine," said Crowe to Nickleby. "Interesting, that."

Extremely interesting, for the mine must have been near the surface for the shell to have exploded it—near enough to the surface to damage a shallow-draft destroyer as well as a deep-draft battleship. Crowe had suspected that possibility.

They were through the labyrinth of mines now and the Apache's pulses were beating quicker as Rowles called for full speed to take them out of danger. The bursting of a shell in their wake close astern told them how the sudden acceleration had saved them once again. And then it happened, the shell that struck right between the aftermost pair of guns and burst there. The wounded Apache reeled at the rending crash of the explosion, so that Crowe retained his footing with difficulty.

He walked to the end of the bridge and looked aft, but the funnels were between him and the point where the shell struck, and there was no obvious damage to be seen; only the first-aid and emergency parties doubling aft, the hoses being unrolled and the trail of heavy black smoke which the Apache was now leaving behind her. But the beat of the screws had not changed, so that the ship's motive power was uninjured.

He felt the Apache heel as Hammett began zigzagging to throw off the aim of the Italian gun layers. A whole cluster of jets of water sprang up from the point they had just left—some of the spray even splashed round him on the bridge—and the Apache heeled again under full helm on a fresh zigzag; it was nervous work waiting for the next salvo, and the next, and the next, while the reports were coming to the bridge of the damage—the aftermost guns completely out of action, the ammunition hoist wrecked, along with the after fire-control station.

It was the price of victory, and a cheap enough price at that. It was not merely the damage done to the Italians—the blazing oil whose thick smoke was making a wide smudge over the now-distant shore, or the shattered MAS, or the wrecked wireless station. The success of the raid meant that in hundreds of little places up and down their coast the Italians would have to redouble their precautions, mount guns and sow mine fields, station troops and maintain a constant guard, everything draining fresh strength from an already exhausted country.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Crowe, as his staff turned to him when the last salvo had fallen far astern. They were a good lot of fellows who knew their jobs thoroughly well. A little academic, perhaps, but that was a fault on the right side. Perhaps in the end they would master the finer points of their profession and acquire the art of putting themselves in the enemy's position and thinking like him.

At that appalling moment when they had found themselves some ten miles from where they expected to be, they had only thought about the enemy academically. They had not realized that surprise was likely to last for many minutes after the initial shock; that the lofty shore which they perceived had been something they were expecting, whereas a sleepy Italian lookout on land had no expectation at all, when he rubbed his eyes and peered through the dawn, of seeing a British flotilla on the horizon, nor had his officers put themselves in the position of the astonished Italians watching the flotilla steam through the mine field, knowing every turn and twist of the channel. In other words, his staff had yet to develop a sympathetic outlook.

Crowe's thoughts began to stray. Today it was the turn for a letter to Susan. A dear girl was Susan; it was a pity he would have to confine himself in his letter to inanities and not be able to give the interesting details of today's work. Susan was of the type that would have appreciated and understood them.

What Crowe did not realize was that it was the same telepathic sympathy, the same instinctive estimate of the other's feelings, which made him a success with women and a success in war at the same time.